

Mirror Vulcan, Mirror Not

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Summary: In the Mirror, Mirror universe, Saavik becomes a player in Spock's plans to overthrow the Empire.

Mirror Vulcan, Mirror Not

Spock stood with his back completely straight, hands folded behind him, and wondered why he had allowed this to happen. He knew it would; there had been no margin of doubt. And yet, when it came time, he made sure the woman was assigned here with him.

He had, however, warned her. He told her what she would be facing and suggested she might prefer to remain elsewhere in the Empire's fleet. She had replied, quite logically, that she was already receiving the same treatment and preferred an assignment with him.

And, as he well knew, he needed her. He needed a new chief for his personal guard, someone loyal and committed to him, someone he could trust. If he was to move any further in the challenge given him by the parallel Kirk, he had to have just such a person with him. So he had agreed and arranged the assignment.

Saavik stood in front of Kirk for inspection. His eyes were travelling insolently down her body in the tight revealing uniform. Spock clenched his hands together more firmly. This was what he had expected. It was known throughout the ship that a crewwoman's first inspection ended in Kirk's bed: captain's orders. Spock's presence would not deter it.

Kirk abruptly frowned as his eyes reached waist level. Pointing to the clip hanging from her belt, he asked, "What are those for?"

She glanced down briefly at the collection of Imperial insignia pins, unique in their design of a dagger embedded in a planet. "They're from the people I've killed. My way of keeping count. Sir." She allowed a half-smile when Kirk sat straighter in his desk chair. Nothing of her Vulcan nature was evident and the POW tattoo on her left forearm only emphasized her Romulan half. If Kirk knew more

about the war camps' numbering system, he'd know this particular tattoo marked not only her prisoner ID, but showed she was a Vulcan/Romulan hybrid.

"So, you're going to be Spock's new Chief," Kirk continued.

"Yes, sir. Of his personal guard."

"Since his previous one was killed." He locked eyes with her. Spock knew Kirk had his people murder Stek, and the captain must wonder if this knowledge was passed on to Saavik.

"A regrettable action, sir."

Kirk relaxed back into his chair, obviously pleased. Saavik had seemed less arrogant. He directed his next statement at Spock. "You can go now. She'll be at her post later."

The Vulcan did not move right away, ready to argue that Saavik was, after all, his personal guard. He was not supposed to be without her. But Kirk's next words left no doubt that he was quite serious, and the agony booth was not too far away.

"That was an order, Mr. Spock."

There was no further choice. The Vulcan gave a nod of his head and turned on his heel to leave. He hesitated as he passed Saavik, but she made no sign that she considered anything wrong. She gave him the same mocking glance she gave Kirk which, Spock could see, the captain noted.

She could be maneuvering herself closer to the captain for the sake of inside information or An unpleasant thought suddenly occurred to him. Perhaps this is what she wanted; Kirk, after all, did have a great deal of power. "Report to me as soon as you are finished here, Lieutenant," he said crisply and left without another word.

Secretly, Saavik was relieved. It would not do to have Kirk suspect that Spock meant anything outside of the professional to her. At least, not for right now. Seeing the assured leer on his face as his eyes once more traveled over her not too well hidden curves, she could see he didn't.

She knew how dangerous Kirk was. His reputation reached throughout Starfleet, and she'd learned much in her preparations to come here. Her last captain was foul enough, earning her a Starfleet Investigator assigned to her ship. Filled with a strong hatred of all things Romulan, Captain Hunter punished Saavik with that bigotry. But in her initial orders to come to the Enterprise was the demand that she bring Hunter's recordings of Saavik's agony booth sessions. That made Kirk even more contemptible as far as she was concerned. Unfortunately, he had been too successful with Starfleet Command to aggravate them and get an Investigator, someone that effectively bound his hands, assigned to the Enterprise.

In what he thought was a charming tone, Kirk told her, "Please sit down, Lieutenant. Make yourself comfortable." He was a bit surprised when she didn't do so right away. She first walked around the cabin, taking in everything, her fingers lightly tracing the ornaments,

before she turned back to face him with a slight twist of a smile and slipped smoothly into a chair in the living area of his cabin. Grinning broadly, he joined her, leaning closer towards her chair. He waited for a positive sign before he reached across to lay one hand on the seat's arm. "So, Saavik-"

"You shouldn't use my name without permission," she said evenly.

"And do I have your permission?"

She gave him that same, slight smile and her eyes revealed what he wanted to see. "I think we should first know each other better."

"Oh, I agree. Being out in space, alone, you should have a good relationship with your captain. Who knows where it could lead?" Kirk set himself to savor each moment. He had never had a Vulcan, let alone a Romulan. He looked forward to exploring the truths of each delicious rumor, and shedding a little light into the private world of the Vulcan and Romulan physical life.

His hand traced the line of her leg from her knee up around the curve of her left hip. His fingers lingered there to travel back to her thigh.

"You are not supposed to touch a Vulcan," she warned him, lowering her voice to a throaty softness. "It might lead to something more involved. Could you handle such an involvement, Captain?"

He laughed under his breath. "I'm willing to try." He ran his fingers through the clip of Imperial pins. "These aren't regulation, you know. You'll have to take them off."

"If you insist, Captain. However, I have settled this with Starfleet Command, and they gave me permission to carry them as well as any others I gather."

"Oh, really," he muttered, more interested in the play of feminine muscle as he moved up her arm. Her skin was so warm. The thought of being surrounded by it tantalized him.

"I'm rather proud of some of them. One belonged to an admiral."

"And how did you get that?" he whispered close to her ear; an ear so sensitive to the barest of sounds, he only had to breathe the words he wanted her to hear.

"He was trying to murder Mr. Spock. So I waited, and when he tried to seduce me, I killed him."

A wave of cold ran down Kirk's back. Abruptly, he pulled back to see her eyes laughing at him. One of his hands was on her shoulder, the other halfway around her back, while hers were within easy reach of her phaser and knife. What a fool he had been! Trying to bed Spock's guard when she knew he was responsible for the last attempt on the Vulcan's life.

"May I be dismissed, sir? I should be at my post."

Vulcan or not, he knew she was laughing at him. To make it worse, she had him and was letting him go. Letting him go, and there was nothing he could do about it.

Slowly, he straightened up. "Dismissed, Lieutenant." She rose from her chair, her hand never straying far from her phaser. "I'm sure we'll be seeing each other," he said in way of warning.

She saluted from the doorway. "As you say, sir."

His fist slammed down against the call button, yelling to his guard, "Johnson! Get me that Romulan bitch! I want her pointed ears mounted for my wall!"

Slamming the chairs out of his way, he took two angry strides to a plain wall panel and pressed it on the bottom right hand corner. The panel slid up to reveal the strongest source of his power: the Tantalus Field. It looked relatively simple in its alcove, consisting of a small screen and a few sparse controls. Activating it, he focused the monitor on the outside hall. There were Spock and Saavik. He had held himself back with Spock before now, taking more pleasure in a slow attack on the Vulcan's forces. He was more immediately angry with Saavik, but his rage now spread to the other Vulcan. Had he put Saavik up to this? Behind that cold mask, was he laughing with her? Damn Starfleet for making the Vulcan a Captain of Sciences. It gave him too much of an extra margin.

Kirk tightened the range of the field, singling out Spock. What would be better? To kill Saavik now and let Spock see her simply wiped out of existence, or to let Saavik watch helplessly as Spock disappeared and then let the captain's guard slowly break her under his eager eyes?

The vilest curses filled Kirk's head. He couldn't kill Spock; he'd never be able to justify it and he would have to justify it. And this was too easy a way to kill Saavik. No, he'd use the booth on her and have the pleasure of enjoying her, her will broken, and seeing how Spock reacted to the latest losing of his Chief Guard.

Other personnel were walking around the Vulcans now. He picked one of them at random. He'd still show Saavik that he was not to be trifled with; a little preview of what he had in store for her. Later, he'd find out how much Spock was involved in today's humiliation.

His good mood returned, Kirk reached for the firing button.

With her inspection - and warning - over with Kirk, Saavik found Spock waiting for her outside the captain's cabin. "I did not expect you here," she said honestly. "I was on my way to the bridge." When she was with him, more of her Vulcan self surfaced, but allowing her Romulan nature exacted a price. She could never have full control over her emotions as long as she let that control lapse. But she willingly paid that cost and played the stereotypical Romulan, allowing her enemies to see what they expected to see and underestimate her as a threat.

She scanned the corridor. Spock was alone. He had called none of the guard to fill in for her while she was with Kirk. That would not do. He had more experience in the Fleet, and with Kirk in particular, than she did; but she well knew that things were changing, what his

plans were, and what exactly that challenge had been from the parallel Kirk. The stakes had been raised. He could no longer be unguarded at any time. She'd see to that herself. She had started when she came onboard the previous evening, and had spent the time critically investigating each of the guard now under her command. She needed to know if each person could not only guard Spock's back, but also be loyal and strong enough to go into the hostilities appearing on the horizon. She'd ordered two guards transferred, and had killed Slovak outright, finding him partially responsible for Kirk's last attempt on Spock.

She now took note that usual guard outside of Kirk's cabin was absent. Satisfactory.

Spock focused on the room she had just vacated. "I thought I should wait for you. I am your superior officer."

"My inspection is over. Perhaps we should report to our posts, sir."

He nodded, but she could tell his thoughts were elsewhere. She thought of asking him, but decided it was not her place. She was a product of a Vulcan father who had gone into prison with a Romulan prisoner of war, but she had never really known either parent. Her father's family had demanded his suicide due to the dishonor he had caused them; her mother had been killed by the camp guards.

Saavik was ten when Spock arrived to investigate the war camp. A family enemy tracked him there, intending to assassinate him by backing a prisoner revolution. Taking the risk, feeling she had nothing to lose and knowing the Romulans felt no loyalty to her, she had convinced Spock she could get him to safety in return for her release. Eventually, her service got her an Imperial citizenship, with the stipulation that she never remove the Romulan POW tattoo that designated her lower social station.

Spock understood her pain and her alienation; she needed him. She had no idea why he bothered with her.

"Your inspection," he said now, hesitantly, "was over rather quickly."

She answered in Vulcan so the now passing personnel would not understand her. "It was long enough to establish what I wanted. You have to be safe; that is the point of you having a personal guard. I believe Kirk holds less of an advantage now. Or he will soon if I'm correct in thinking he was too busy watching one hand to notice the other."

Spock did not understand her meaning, but he knew he would. Either she would explain it to him or it would become evident on its own. More importantly, she had somehow found a way to avoid what had been the inevitable; Kirk had no hold on her.

Suddenly, a scream of pure rage came from Kirk's cabin. The other personnel stopped in surprise and then hurriedly moved on. Spock turned to Saavik, one eyebrow raised in question. "While I was taking a tour of his rooms, I placed a small explosive on the device you mentioned. He gave away its location by the way his eyes returned to it whenever he felt threatened - the mention of your previous Chief

Guard, when you hesitated in leaving, and at mention of these." She gave her clip of pins a quick tap as she tied them, rendering them silent when she moved. "If the schematics you were able to procure are correct, he might be incapable of rebuilding it."

Somehow, Spock's brow rose even higher. The Tantalus Field, destroyed? _Yes, of course. Sometimes the simple plan is best_. It was much like his own scheme years ago. Marlena had paid the price for that failure. Now Saavik might pay the price for her success.

He gave two fast searches of the corridor and started towards the lift. "Come along."

She drew a modified tricorder to scan for approaching personnel. "To our posts?"

He nodded. Now he understood why she had pressed to go the bridge earlier. "He must have called for his guard by now. We cannot be found in this vicinity. We would be executed soon after."

The turbolift doors had barely begun to open when Saavik saw one of Kirk's guard inside. "Down!" she shouted, shoving Spock to his knees, her knife sailing cleanly over his head into the chest of the attacker.

Spock extracted her knife, unceremoniously dropping the body and kicking it into the hall, then taking the lift. "Bridge," he ordered. The rest of the captain's guard would be here shortly, and they would be gone. Kirk would not like it at all, but it paid him back for his last attack.

Odd, all these attacks over the years when Kirk does not really need me dead. And all since his return from the other universe. It was a lethal game to keep the first officer sharp, and emphasize who was in command. Kirk did much the same with the rest of the command crew. He pushed Scott, Sulu, Uhura, and Chekov to razor sharpness, only to stifle their careers so they never moved on to become a fatal threat with ships of their own.

Only McCoy was excluded. No one touched the medical staff. Everyone knew they'd be in sick bay at some point and didn't need a doctor with a grudge.

Calmly, Spock handed back Saavik's knife. "Welcome to the _Enterprise_, Lieutenant. I hope you do not regret it."

"No, Captain. I do not."

She activated a device from her belt. Communication jammer: they couldn't be overheard on any of Sulu's security devices. Logically, Spock must not think she had failed or he would have punished her with the agony booth or her agonizer. She still wanted to say it herself. "I'm aware of the risk in destroying Kirk's weapon, but it had to be done. You could make no move with such a threat to your safety. Captain Kirk will be hard pressed to find any evidence, but if he does, only I will face the repercussions. I arranged it this way. If I am executed, you will still be safer than you were with the Tantalus Field active and before I strengthened the rest of your guard. You are protected."

She started to turn off the device but Spock halted her. "I was given the schematics by Marlana Moreau."

She nodded. "One of Kirk's women." _Interesting. Why did she give them to Spock?_

"He discovered her deception but did not know who received those schematics. Since you were not aware of this, you could not accommodate for it. We might be vulnerable."

"He cannot prove you received them."

"He may not have to. Be careful, Lieutenant. And next time, inform me of your plans."

She tensed. Spock had never used the agonizer or the booth on her, but it was his right. "I wanted you to have plausible deniability."

He nodded again. "And the fault is partly mine. I should have informed you when I gave you the schematics. I congratulate you on your success. I had not attempted such a plan myself since Lieutenant Moreau's death."

A faint humorous light touched her eyes. "As you have tended towards an all male guard and Kirk is heterosexual, I can understand why."

"And Captain Kirk never gave me an opportunity near the Field. Now that I have finally translated the alien technical concepts, I may build my own."

He reached for the jammer, the slight touch against her hand revealing he had never intended her any pain. She relaxed from that tension at least.

He paused, once more staring intently at her. "I have drawn you into the battle between Captain Kirk and myself."

She moved up from her place one step behind to stand next to him. "I have no regrets, Spock."

Something gleamed behind his guarded dark eyes. "Neither do I, Saavik."

He switched off the jammer as the doors opened to the bridge.

Later, the lift doors opened again, this time more quickly than usual, hinting at a pair of hands forcing them. Every crewmember looked up curiously, saluted, then rapidly returned to stare at their control boards when they saw the enraged look on Kirk's face and the heavily armed members of his guard.

The captain swept a searching gaze across all of them, noticing each person was where they should be including Spock and Saavik. The Vulcans had made no different a move than anyone else; they had glanced back when he had entered, had returned to their work, and now focused their eyes on the computers while they concentrated on his movements behind them. No sign of anything unusual.

Johnson, his Chief Guard, started moving towards them, motioning two of the others to follow when Kirk held his arm out, barring their way. Johnson looked surprised but obeyed. He signaled the men to keep their phasers drawn when the captain began to walk across the bridge.

Kirk was no fool; he would never have reached a starship captain's position if he hadn't learned the value of being cautious. His first instinct was to lock the Vulcans in the agony booth at full intensity until they finally died days later. He still allowed himself the pleasure of picturing the images in his mind, but he knew better than to order it. Spock could not be killed without proof that it was necessary; he had too many career and family connections that would demand an explanation upon his death. And Saavik was an unknown; Kirk didn't know what alliances she had, so he couldn't know if her death would be investigated.

He stood silently at the science station for a moment, hoping he was having an effect on the Vulcans' calm, before he turned back to the rest of the bridge and centered on Sulu. He knew the ship's Security Chief had been on the bridge before the incident, because he had talked to him directly before and after Saavik had been in his cabin. He only needed circumstantial evidence; only one fact that would shed a little dark light on the science officer and his guard, and he could justify their executions.

Things were looking better so he felt free to smile. "Mr. Sulu."

The helmsman answered instantly. "Yes, sir."

"Tell me, Mr. Sulu, who was the last to report to the bridge?" Kirk turned the cold smile back on Spock.

"Mr. Chekov."

Spock had the sense not to raise his eyebrow satirically when he saw the captain's smile fade. Sulu did flinch slightly, though, when Kirk bit out, "What!"

The helmsman refused to let any hesitancy be heard in his voice. "Chekov was the last to report for duty, Captain."

"But I was not late, sir!" the Russian argued quickly.

Kirk's eyes pinned him in his seat. "Was anyone with you on the lift?"

"No, sir," he replied, desperately wishing to know why he was in trouble.

"I want to see the Security playback of the bridge for the last fifteen minutes," Kirk ordered harshly, waiting for it to start on one of the upper deck's small screens as Sulu hurriedly complied.

At the time of the explosion, four people were missing from the bridge: Chekov, Spock, Saavik, and Uhura. The Vulcans arrived before Chekov but after Uhura; they had neither rushed to be first, nor waited too long and been last. And of course, they had been on time for duty. That was his own fault; he had scheduled Saavik's interview so he could have time before he had to report to the bridge.

himself.

The bridge's main lift opened and another of Kirk's guard stepped out. The woman hurried over to Johnson and whispered in his ear. He, in return, drew closer to Kirk and reported softly, "The analysis on the explosive device has identified it as Starfleet design. Anyone could have picked it up from ship stores."

"And the knife wound from the murdered man?"

"Standard issued dagger."

Standard issue, Starfleet design. Nothing Vulcan, nothing Romulan. "Did you check with storage records to see who had requested explosives recently?"

"Yes, sir. Ten different people had orders filled in the past hour; all of them were Security personnel using them for simulation purposes. Neither Captain Spock's nor Lieutenant Saavik's name appears on the requisition list. And since we know it was a small explosive, it could be slipped in on the palm of your hand. Anyone could have placed the device in your cabin before you entered it last."

"Check the Security playback from my cabin!"

"Yes, sir, I have. It was destroyed. We have none of the recordings from today."

"And where the hell was the guard outside my door!"

"He received orders to leave that duty station. We checked, sir. They look legitimate. He believed them, thinking you didn't want anyone within earshot while you interviewed Lieutenant Saavik."

Kirk growled under his breath. "Damn stupid idea. It adds to the excitement if the guard hears something."

Except Saavik played him for a fool, escaping his bed.

And the Tantalus Field was destroyed.

Faked orders: that meant security, computers, and communications. He was blocked on all angles; not even the slightest bit of incriminating evidence. He could charge the Vulcans based on the fact that they hadn't been on the bridge and were the last ones to leave his cabin. But to make it look convincing, he'd have to charge Uhura and Chekov for not being on the bridge as well, and Sulu for issuing explosives to the Security personnel. Not to mention that either Uhura or Sulu could have faked those orders. He couldn't afford to lose so many of the command crew.

Kirk stared into Spock's inscrutable eyes, looking for any sign of guilt, and then did the same to Saavik, taking in the damned Imperial pins hanging at her hip. Unfortunately, she hadn't been stupid enough to take the pin off his dead guard and point the finger at herself.

It wasn't over yet. If he couldn't punish them, he'd make his own attack.

He was still facing Saavik while he thought, annoyed that Spock had the right to keep his own guard on the bridge because the cursed Vulcan had named her assistant science officer. Even now, she had moved protectively closer to Spock while Kirk and Johnson remained nearby. Very close.

Suddenly, Kirk viewed the slim distance between Saavik and Spock more closely. _Not just doing our job, are we, Saavik? No guard stands that close._

It might not mean anything, but he would take the risk. _Attack_.

He turned to address the entire bridge personnel. "I know you're all wondering what this is about. I'm ready to tell you. I never want to see this crew grow lax. If you do, you are off my ship unless I kill you first -" He smiled tightly. "- as a lesson. So, I designed a test for you and, especially, our new crew." He reached out and took Saavik's chin between his fingers, knowing how the gesture would look and knowing she couldn't refuse while outnumbered. "I'm pleased with the results." With no further explanation, he turned on his heel calling out behind him, "Lieutenant Saavik, come with me. Mr. Spock, you have the conn."

Johnson and the guards surrounded Saavik leaving her with no choice. She was escorted past curious and knowing glances to the turbolift, watching Spock for as long as she could before the lift doors closed.

"She's dead," Uhura remarked casually and then laughed. "She's been onboard what? Twenty four hours? That must be a new record."

Chekov's smile was lecherous. "And I was just beginning to like her."

"As if you could handle her," Sulu mocked him.

Spock's voice sliced through their banter like a stiletto. "Return to your duties."

Sulu's gaze challenged him, then wavered before the Vulcan's arctic stare. A heavy silence fell over the bridge.

The first officer sat in thought for a brief moment before swinging his seat back towards his station. He opened his private communications circuits, paying vague attention to Uhura's offer to help, knowing it was only an attempt to learn his business. It was time to make the next move.

Saavik was back inside Kirk's cabin with their roles now inwardly reversed: he the aggressor, she on the defensive. Outwardly, neither one showed a lack of confidence. She had taken a glance around when she first entered as she was expected to, not making a point of either avoiding or paying overt attention to the ruined Tantalus Field. Kirk called attention to it, however, by sitting in the chair right in front of the blackened circuitry.

He made himself comfortable before gesturing behind him. "Do you know what this was, Lieutenant?"

"It appeared to be a wall hanging when I was last here, Captain," she replied casually.

"It was more than that, Lieutenant, much more." He changed the subject by reaching over to the small table nearby and setting out two drinking glasses, pouring equal amounts of amber colored liquid into both. "Sit down and have a drink with me," he said and pulled the chair she had sat in earlier directly in front of him.

"No, thank you, sir. I prefer to stand here," she answered, making it clear it was the nearness to him that bothered her more. "And I am not thirsty."

"It wasn't a request," he replied silkily. "Obey or you'll find out you don't have all the answers you think you do."

Saavik didn't like his tone, but she was no more a fool than he was. She took the seat in front of him, still facing him with the quiet bluster she affected for appearance's sake. "That is not a good remark on my character. I regret to see that I have somehow changed your opinion of me."

"I'm sure you are, so I know you'll be glad that not all my ideas about you have changed." He circled her knee with just the tip of his finger. "I still have some hopes for you."

She crossed her legs in the other direction. "Is that why you called me down here?"

"Perhaps."

"Then before we proceed, may I ask you a question?" He nodded for her to go on. "What test were you referring to on the bridge?"

He smiled at her attempt to call his bluff. "The test that is still going on."

She gave a slow, thoughtful nod and then leaned forward with her elbows on her knees and her hands folded. Her body was a subtle invitation, but her eyes were not. "Then what is expected of me?"

Kirk gave a small laugh. There was something about her that he could enjoy; she did not back down and made no attempt to hide her knowledge of his actions. He put his drink down and stood up to walk behind the chair. "To learn."

"Anything in particular?"

"That you're not as safe as you think you are." He played idly with a couple of wires that had once worked the Field's monitor. "This was once a weapon, Lieutenant. It made me very powerful. With it, I destroyed anyone I wanted to, mostly to further myself." He glanced back to her. "Do you know what it didn't make me? It didn't make me weak. As you can see, someone has destroyed it, probably thinking I would be crippled without it. They're wrong." He could see a wariness about her now. "Let me see if I can explain this simply," he said as he sat back down. The words must gall her. She certainly didn't need a simple explanation; her IQ was higher than his was. "The

Enterprise, in a way, is a weapon that has made me powerful, but do you think it's the only reason I'm a strong opponent?"

"No, sir," she answered truthfully. "But then, I would not think it about your loss of this other weapon, especially since you could repair it."

"It was an alien design. The person who destroyed it probably thinks I can't repair it."

Another bluff. Saavik was unsure if he spoke the truth or not, and then decided it didn't matter. If he could repair it, she could sabotage the parts, perhaps even make it possible for the surge to channel back into the captain's cabin. She did have those schematics, and Spock understood the design.

If she had any time after Kirk was done with her here.

"But," he was saying, "I would expect you to understand like you did. Romulans understand about war. And I've certainly learned to appreciate Vulcans from Mr. Spock. That's why I've decided to transfer you to my own guard."

Never did she expect that. Thrown off balance, she simply asked, "Sir?"

"That's right. You handle yourself well; on the bridge, you never became uneasy while I was questioning for lack of duty. You answer my questions well proving your intelligence. I need people like that working directly for me. Plus, there are always those hopes I had for you." He ran a finger over her collarbone and down her breastbone.

Her eyes flashed with anger over the affront even as she sat there, rapidly trying to think of a solution. Logically, she should let him transfer her; that way, she could warn Spock of any attack and be there to prevent it with firsthand information. Illogically...

Illogically, she did not want to leave Spock, even in this minor way.

Kirk broke her concentration by hooking his finger in her uniform blouse and pulling her towards him while leaning forward himself. He was not inviting her for anything now, seriously or not. He was all aggression, stripping a potential threat down to nothing. "You took a good gamble, Lieutenant. You knew I couldn't really do anything to Spock if you covered your tracks well enough, and Spock can block a good number of my attacks. But you can't and that is where you went wrong. I could assign you to duty around the antimatter chamber right now and have someone 'accidentally' push you in." He rubbed the tattoo on her arm with his other hand. "I can strip you of your citizenship and have you returned to the war camp. And there's not a damn thing anyone could do about it. Every minute that you breathe from now on is because I let you and if you think Spock can save you, know that he can't."

Saavik felt a moment of indecision and some of her confidence wavered. She was caught, but as she had said earlier to Spock, she had known this was a possibility. There was only one thing to do:

bring all of Kirk's anger on her and save Spock. Her death ought to appease the captain extricating the first officer from the worst of Kirk's revenge... if she didn't take him with her. "Why not kill me now?"

He smiled with true pleasure. "Because I'm enjoying myself."

"Then I provide some service," she responded dryly.

"Yes, you do," he remarked. One side of his mouth pulled back in an amused, superior smile. "You're still thinking of him, aren't you?"

She was deliberately vague. "Sir?"

"Spock," he answered as if it was obvious. "You're still centering on him. You're thinking of how to save him from me. Scary, isn't it, Lieutenant? How well I can read your mind."

She wouldn't give him the pleasure of knowing.

"And what do you think is on his mind right now? You? I doubt it." He laughed as he spoke, to prove how ridiculous the idea was. "You don't see him here, do you, coming to your protection the way you would his." He searched her eyes, more deeply this time, looking for any sign that she might believe him. He didn't fear Saavik, but he was cautious of her. She had destroyed the Tantalus Field and that left him vulnerable. And if Spock was willing to defend her, that vulnerable area became weaker. So he had to see if the Vulcan would attack. But Saavik shut everything out of sight and gave a textbook answer.

"I would never accuse Captain Spock," she emphasized the rank, "of such impassioned thoughts. They are not worthy of a Vulcan."

All right then, he could still take her. It meant she'd have access to his guards' movements, but she wouldn't be alive long enough to do anything with the information. "As you say, Lieutenant. Now," he pulled on her tunic again so she was fully out of her chair and on her knees, so teasingly close to him. "How long before you can report for duty as one of my guard? Keep in mind that I am impatient to start your private training."

Saavik's last dream had been to fly with Spock. Her first dream had been to have her mother care for her the way she thought a mother should; she hadn't. Her second had been to just have her mother since she was the only one the hybrid had; her mother was murdered. She had dreamed of knowing her father, or at least his memory, but had been denied the right to even speak his name in connection with herself. With all of that gone, her heart died and friendship meant nothing. Her life was hers alone, her only oath to keep herself alive.

Even Spock, in the middle of the war camp's upheaval, was a means to an end, just as she was to him. She had sworn fiercely in broken Vulcan, "You dead; you know it. You follow me. You die, I die. You live, I _free_!"

He had stared in her too old eyes and found something there to believe. "Agreed."

She helped him over the years following that day, and was rewarded with her citizenship and Academy appointment. For years, she was a tool, a weapon he wielded. And then, the association became more: a strong mutual esteem, a friendship culminating in Spock making the greatest leap of faith and telling her his plans to stop the Empire's destructive ways. And Saavik found she had one last dream.

It had finally come true. For twenty four hours, she'd served on a starship at Spock's side.

Kirk just took that away.

_Goodbye, Spock. _

Being Vulcan and Romulan, she was stronger than Kirk, and he had once again made the mistake of tying up his hands while hers were free. He'd expect her to go for a weapon. Instead, she'd shove him with all her formidable strength into the bulkhead. The blow would kill him or at least cause unconsciousness, broken bones, and the imprint of his body in the wall. She'd slay him before he could rise. His guard would never let her out of the cabin alive, but Kirk would be dead, and Spock alive and safe.

She felt proud that, in this last moment, her Vulcan control was never stronger. She met his angry, lustful gaze with total ice. Then, as she prepared to strike, Kirk seized her in a punishing kiss, his mouth bruising hers, and trapping her arms between their bodies. The unexpected action stunned her for the barest instant and caused her to almost miss him drawing a hypo from behind his back. If her reflexes were any less quick, she'd never have grabbed his wrist in time as he tried to inject her. Not poison, she was sure, but something to incapacitate her, leaving her wide awake but helpless. _Bastard! And damn me for being caught off guard with that trick!_

The quiet sound of the door's hail seemed too loud in the tense silence where they fought to kill or be killed. "What!" Kirk yelled into the air.

Spock walked in followed, surprisingly, by Johnson. Kirk's voice spat at him harshly. "Back outside!"

Spock's voice, on the other hand, had the same natural quality it always had. Even as he took in the sight of Saavik on her knees pressed close to Kirk's body. Even as he saw Kirk's one hand clenched in her uniform blouse as Saavik crushed the other wrist which held a hypo. Even with Johnson standing behind him. "Message from Starfleet Command, Captain. First priority."

"Go on!" Kirk jerked Saavik to her feet as he rose, never relinquishing his hold on her. His eyes bore into hers, but snapped up as Spock read the message.

"Starfleet Command wishes to inform you of the Imperial appointment of Captain Spock, currently serving aboard the _ISS Enterprise_, as Starfleet Investigator to the aforementioned ship. They advise Captain James T. Kirk to accord him the proper rights as befitting his station. End of message."

End of everything. A Starfleet Investigator was assigned to those

starships whose captain was under suspicion. If the Investigator died, even if the death was natural, the captain would be charged with murder. And if Kirk touched Saavik, Spock would pull Starfleet down on him. Spock had won.

"Captain," the first officer continued, "I wish to discuss this with you before we go any further. However, I first suggest we change this standoff position." His voice grew harder and his eyes colder. "Lieutenant, you are away from your post."

Kirk seethed with rage, but recognized that the steel in the Vulcan's voice and gaze was aimed at him. It was the tone Spock used on his opponents; they ones who didn't listen, died. He released Saavik and watched as she moved back, her head turning slightly to put Johnson in her peripheral vision. As she slipped into position at Spock's shoulder, Johnson moved to his next to Kirk. Still a standoff, but less perilous than the previous one.

Kirk glared at Spock. "Talk!"

"I want no more war, Captain," Spock said. Kirk's eyebrows jumped to his hairline in surprise. "I find this constant private battle illogical and a waste of resources. But I am not ignorant. I know I cannot simply call for a halt in aggressions and expect you to comply. I therefore made my position more secure."

Kirk jabbed a finger at him. The sudden ending to Saavik's punishment left his rage clouding his mind. "You admit you destroyed the Tantalus Field!"

"No, sir. I speak of my obtaining the Investigator's position. As for the Tantalus Field, I admit I knew of its existence, but I did not destroy it."

Kirk jerked his head at Saavik. "She did it for you! It's the same thing."

"Perhaps." Saavik, Spock was gratified to see, did not react to the accusation at all. "As I said earlier, however, I wish to discuss my Investigator's assignment."

"What more can you say?"

"This." He held out a tablet. "It announces a position open for a Fleet Admiral."

Guardedly, Kirk took it from him. "Desk job."

"No, Captain. It's a field command of three ships. You cannot secure this position yourself. As powerful as you are, your enemies would unite against you. However, if I support you with all the connections I have made, between the two of us, you can have it."

Even Saavik looked startled at that. Spock held up a hand to stop Kirk from interrupting. "Hear me, Captain. This battle must stop. The Enterprise can no longer survive with the increased amount of assassination attempts. Another of the command crew would immediately kill whichever of us survives our initial confrontation. We are all deadlocked against each other and the ship suffers from the chaos within."

He took a step forward. "Take the Admiral's position. Give Sulu the captaincy of one of the ships in your fleet. It will satisfy his ambitions and you will still command him. Give the other ship to Scott, Uhura or Chekov, whomever you prefer."

Kirk was snide. "And give you the _Enterprise_."

The Vulcan nodded. "Yes. You can make it your flagship keeping it and me under your control. It does not matter. I have told you before I prefer to be the lesser target."

"What do you get out of this?" Kirk asked cagily.

"An end to your hostilities and a chance to move further. Gridlocked as we are, you and I have reached as far as we can go. With a truce, we become more powerful. A profitable situation, Captain."

"And the Tantalus Field?" Kirk insisted.

"I would suggest having Scott attempt to repair it, but then he would build one for himself. I cannot be safe with either of you owning such a device. I suggest this: either disregard repairing it - leaving us on equal footing - or I will aid you in rebuilding it with the stipulation that I build one for myself as well."

"Never!"

"Captain, this truce only works if we have equality. I do not have to offer you this to gain an advantage. If I wanted that, I could use my Investigator title to destroy you."

Kirk was quiet and Spock knew he had his rage under control now. His captain held up the tablet with the Admiral's position on it. "I'll think it over, Spock."

"Do not take too much time, Captain. I will not be deceived into waiting for an answer while you plot to strike."

Kirk met his gaze. "Point taken, Spock. Don't push me any further."

Spock nodded and turned to leave. Kirk's voice cracked like a whip. "Stop!"

His strides closed the gap between them. Still taut and alert, Saavik and Johnson repositioned themselves with their captains.

"You can dance around as much as you want," he spoke, deadly. The finger he stabbed at Saavik almost crushed her throat. "She destroyed the Tantalus Field."

"What proof do you offer?"

"I don't need proof!" Kirk's voice was as loud and violent as before. But now, even worse, his rage was controlled and he used it as a weapon. "I know she did it. I will _not_ _let_ that go unpunished. The rest of the crew won't stay in line if I don't keep discipline!"

"A valid point," the Vulcan conceded. "But you still have no proof that either I or Lieutenant Saavik destroyed your weapon. And, Captain, you do need proof."

Kirk didn't waiver. "She must be punished, Spock. I do that and she's free. And we go through with this deal of yours."

If Spock didn't have the upper hand due to his Investigator's title, it would be a good arrangement. He did have the upper hand, however, and now faced the same decision as he did on the bridge. He must move forward; did he destroy Kirk in doing so? What sacrifices did he make if he kept Kirk alive?

In the breath of time he had to decide, he didn't dare look to Saavik. He couldn't be seen asking his inferior for her opinion. In comparison to his control, she was Romulan fury leashed, ready to snap.

He had made his decision on the bridge; he made another to stay with it now. He hoped Saavik would trust him and forgive him if this did not work as he planned.

"I will not concede your accusation, Captain." Kirk lunged and stopped abruptly at the Vulcan's raised hand. "I will, however, concede to the punishment to ensure continued discipline. Your suggestion?"

Saavik's hands clenched at her sides but she made no protest. Kirk smiled evilly and held out his hand. "Your agonizer, Lieutenant. Let's see how long before it knocks you unconscious."

Spock took the agonizer and held it behind his back, keeping it in his folded hands. "I have my own suggestion, Captain. I'll take her to the booth myself. She'll stay there for thirty minutes, minimum intensity."

"No! Not good enough! If you prefer the booth, fine. But I know Vulcans can block its pain, especially the low level. You're not giving me anything. Now, maximum intensity for a long period of time will outlast the strongest person's control." Kirk watched Saavik as studiously as Spock didn't. She battled for control now while they argued her fate and she had no say in it. "So, the booth, maximum intensity, two hours," Kirk said.

Spock shook his head. "A half hour, Captain." Kirk opened his mouth to make a counteroffer but Spock cut him off, his own voice now tinged with vehemence. "A half hour, Captain. No more, no less, or I will tell you there is no bargain. You understand what that will mean to you."

Kirk's jaw worked back and forth. "All right. Agreed. A half hour. Johnson, have two guards escort Lieutenant Saavik to the booth. Mr. Spock, as well. I'm sure he'll want to watch."

Johnson asked, "You won't join us, sir?"

"No." Kirk's smile mocked her. "The Lieutenant is no longer worth my time."

Saavik exhaled through her teeth with a hiss, but she saluted with

Spock. She turned from Kirk's glare and walked out.

The first thing she saw in the corridor was the sight of Spock's guard fanned out, standing calmly, eyeing Kirk's own people across from them: a battle waiting to happen. The Enterprise had come perilously close to full civil war.

Each Vulcan guard in turn met her gaze evenly, analyzing if she and Spock were all right, if the battle was still on. In each of their eyes, she saw that commitment to Spock and, to her surprise, a commitment to her.

"Mr. Johnson," Spock ordered. "You may dismiss your guard. The captain's assignment only requires two of them."

Johnson looked ready to argue, but Spock was still the first officer. Even the captain's guard had to follow his orders, unless doing so put Kirk at risk.

Johnson motioned to two of his people and dismissed the rest. Two of Spock's men, Soluk and Stron, eyed their commander. He merely nodded and signaled for his own guard to disperse as well. He searched Saavik's piercing eyes and said nothing. The two security men migrated to either side of the Vulcans, taking Saavik's weapons, and they began walking to the agony booth.

Saavik said nothing the whole way there. I am alive. I will continue to live. That was in doubt only moments ago. Spock saved me. Illogical to feel he shouldn't agree to this sentence especially when she herself had earlier screamed silently to him Accept! Her captain had decided Kirk would live. Why? That meant they must allow this.

The Tantalus Field is still destroyed, Spock is still safe, and I accomplished the mission I set for myself.

They turned the corner and the booth was there. The guard in front of her opened the door; the one behind drew his phaser. She met Spock's inscrutable gaze and stepped inside.

She braced herself, calling upon her pain disciplines. She knew from experience about the torment ahead. The agony would rip along each nerve ending, tearing at her control for every second of the half-hour, an eternity. It would leave her unable to stand, muscles twitching, and her nerves jarred for hours as they continued to send sharp impulses through her system. But I will be alive!

One guard worked the controls while the other kept his phaser out, stepping closer to the booth's clear walls to watch. His companion set the intensity and began the recorder. Of course. Despite his earlier bravado, Kirk wanted to witness her pain. The recording, while not the experience of seeing it live, let him play at being disdainful while he could watch this scene repeatedly in private.

The guard looked up at her, grinning, hand hovering over the control button to start the booth, torturing her with the wait. She glared back, jaw clenched against her anger, showing him nothing but utter defiance. His hand reached down, slowly at first, then rushing down until-

- he stopped a centimeter away from hitting it. He laughed cruelly while she almost crushed her teeth from clamping down at the anger, the rage!

Show him nothing! Give him no satisfaction! Not him, not Kirk when he watches this later, not the other human licking his lips in anticipation.

The guard reached his hand back again, high above his head, and held it there. Saavik's jaw ached with the pressure, but she wished desperately for her killing anger not to come.

If it does, I will have no control. Without control, the pain-

The guard's grin widened with true sadistic pleasure and his hand -

- was caught in one of Spock's own while the Vulcan's other fingers squeezed the sensitive area between neck and shoulder. The guard dropped.

Spock turned, and Saavik saw Soluk and Stron holding Kirk's other guard, also unconscious. The other Vulcans saluted, Stron moving to the booth's controls, powering it down. She almost sagged with relief.

Spock opened the door and she stepped out on her own, not wanting him to know she trembled with coming down off the madness, the relief, _and yes, the shame for having felt betrayed. How could I? Even if I had gone through the full punishment._

She watched Stron continue to work the controls. "We have done this before," Spock explained. "Stron is creating a recording of you in the booth."

She turned, real surprised showing in her voice. "You were the one to order the _Aerfen_'s files of my booth sessions!"

He nodded. "In case this became necessary. To make the recording more real."

Her voice almost revealed her shaking. She controlled it. "I would not scream so much, if at all," she said as she heard Stron's playback.

"Captain Kirk, however, would want you to. We will give him this much at least. Soluk is giving the guards memories that match the recording."

"And relishing it, apparently." Soluk might have made Chief if he didn't derive such pleasure in his work. She might be part Romulan, but Soluk was psychotic.

"Yes. Mr. Soluk! Enough." The Vulcan guard nodded and dropped his victim. Spock returned his attention to her. Her chest was marked where Kirk had manhandled her; her mouth bled slightly where his teeth tore her lip.

His jaw tight, Spock reached out, wiping the blood away. "Do not heal

this yet," he warned, sensing her beginning the Vulcan healing technique. "And you will need to imitate the booth's effects for the sake of the guard and the bridge crew."

"I understand."

Watching Stron and Soluk, she missed his hands clench as he examined Kirk's marks on her. "You are well?"

Nodding, Saavik no longer cared how much her control slipped. Lowering her voice to reach his ears only, she spoke. "I owe you-"

He held up a hand, cutting off what she would have said. "You owe me nothing. You saved my life, I saved yours."

"Logical." But it is not. Someday, I hope I understand why he did not sacrifice me.

"You will no doubt save my life again in the times ahead. Obviously, I no longer plan to take the Enterprise by destroying Kirk. He is a barbarian, the best of them or, perhaps I should say, the worst of them. He is, however, the devil I know. He better serves me by doing as he always does: forcing himself through Starfleet Command, taking me with him while he remains the primary target. With him placated in the Fleet Admiral position and Enterprise in my command, I will turn the Empire if I can."

As I once saved the Halkans? He had convinced Kirk that taking the Halkans' dilithium and leaving them alive to anguish over the violent ways the crystals were used was a better punishment than death. He was not so sure they wouldn't have preferred destruction.

But he couldn't afford to allow doubts to overwhelm him and he no longer fought alone. His forces were growing and now he had Saavik: militantly loyal, guarding his back, helping to plan and move ahead someone who had faith enough to believe in him even if she might not always agree with his beliefs someone who listened, talked with him, and understood.

Spock did not know his counterpart in the Federation, did not know if Saavik had one, or if those counterparts had met. Logically, it did not matter. He had met this Saavik.

She saw some hint of these thoughts in his eyes, but he was speaking. "As I told you before you came aboard, the times have changed. I must now turn enemies into allies wherever possible instead of killing them. It is not the usual duty for a Chief Guard, but the position is still yours if you wish it."

He stopped and then, as if sensing her earlier question of why he hadn't sacrificed her, he answered it. "I have need of you as much as you have need of me. I always have since the day you escorted me safely from the war camp."

The ghost of a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth. "So once again this is you die, I die. You live, we're free."

"Yes." The simple answer belied the intensity in his tone.

She answered him in kind, knowing she pledged herself entirely to him. "I will serve in any way you wish."

He nodded and she thought she saw him relax minutely. For a moment, they allowed themselves the peace of their unity.

"Regrets, Saavik?"

"None, Spock."

End
file.